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## **Marginal Players and Intra-network Connections: New Perspectives on the Manila Trade, c. 1640–1780**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Manila's far-reaching connections based on the trade in saltpeter have received little attention in the entangled histories of the Indian Ocean and the China Seas. Military supplies were not only in high demand among parties in conflicts in the Philippines and its surrounding waters but also frequently redistributed overseas. That way saltpeter came to link Manila and the Coromandel Coast around 1700. Spanish colonial accounts not only testify to the importance of the delicate matter of saltpeter imports, but also suggest that after 1640, following the trade rupture with Japan and interruptions with Fujian and Macau, maritime business patterns altered significantly. The example of saltpeter cargoes thus sheds light on maritime dynamics beyond the spheres of Iberian mercantilist control, including the agency of actors of various backgrounds including Armenians and Portuguese New Christians, as well as English, French and Danish company merchants.

Key Words: Manila, Indian Ocean, China Seas, trade in saltpeter, Iberians

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## I. Introduction

Around the middle of the seventeenth century, established patterns of Manila-based triangular trade were shaken up. Standard histories of Spanish rule over the Philippines (1565–1898) regard the period after 1640, and even more so after 1680, as the age of decline for Manila-based long-distance trade and the end of active Spanish engagement in any kind of exchange apart from subsistence trade. Historians tend to sense a crisis of Spanish rule in the second half of the seventeenth century, which would culminate in the British occupation of Manila a hundred years later (1762–1764). They cite numerous causes of the Spaniards' failure: Dutch mercantile expansion in South East Asia; the decline in Fujianese and Portuguese shipping; the Ming-Qing transition; the ascent of the Braganza to the Portuguese throne in 1640; and the seclusion policies (*sakoku*) in Japan, which led to Japan's complete withdrawal from the China Seas. Seen together, these broad-stroke narratives imply that once the exchange in luxury commodities declined in the mid-seventeenth century, Manila lost its commercial significance altogether.

Historians have traditionally paid little attention to the fact that members of new trading nations including the English and the French frequented Manila, circumventing regional export prohibitions and Spanish access restrictions. However, recent historiography stresses both the importance and continuity of the Manila-based exchange of Chinese silk and American silver to globally relevant social and political processes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Crewe, 2015: 337–365; Mehl, 2016). Indeed, merely by judging from available economic figures of the first seventy years of global Manila trade (1570–1640), it is difficult to deny that there was an economic decline towards the end of that period (Muntaner, 2011).<sup>1</sup> Yet, the decline discourse follows a heavily 'galleon-centric' and China-Sea-centered view. A number of historians have recently challenged as excessive the emphasis on the significance of luxury commodities, the so-called 'silver-for-silk' exchange,<sup>2</sup> with regard to Spanish economic performance in the late eighteenth and nineteenth

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1 His work is a typical example for a decline discourse. He speaks of "market lethargy" setting in in 1643 due to "loss of connections with India, Malaysia and Macao following the Portuguese secession from the Spanish Monarchy and the economic retrenchment of the Chinese market, as a result of its own domestic situation."

2 Most prominently by Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez (1995: 201–221), 'Born with a Silver Spoon: The Origins of World Trade in 1571'.

centuries.<sup>3</sup> To counter-balance notions of Manila's late-seventeenth century crisis, I suggest shifting the focus: We have to extend our view by incorporating other trading goods, new export regions and new participating trading nations. I argue that it is likely that from the very beginning of colonial trade in the 1570s, provisions trade and the supply of daily necessities or military goods was an equally strong engine of Manila-based cross-cultural trade.<sup>4</sup> To help form a clearer picture, I will introduce archival records which list Armenian, Danish, French, and Irish traders, as well as merchants from Bantam and Makassar, who often participated in exchange between ports in the Western Indian Ocean and Manila and sometimes across the Pacific to Mexico—regardless of Spanish restrictions. Their presence in Manila indicates that marginal networks and flexible intra-network connections immune to state competition and ideological or religious reservations helped Manila to keep its status as an attractive port city. Besides, a significant number of recent studies have addressed the global integration of the Spanish colony with concrete case studies including surveys on slave trade and the underestimated commercial links between Macau and Manila.<sup>5</sup>

The main case study of this article deals with Manila's connections with the Coromandel Coast in India, specifically the provision of the Spanish Philippines with military supplies such as saltpeter (potassium nitrate), to a large extent carried out by smaller transregional actors and their networks. Studying them not only helps to overcome too uncritically applied Western-centric concepts, but also offers insights into communication and information transfer, the Spanish mercantilist model, and monopoly policies of other trading nations. This article challenges both the decline thesis of the Iberian presence in East Asia after 1640 (by arguing in favor of continuity in key sectors) and the idea of sustained Chinese agency in the China Seas and beyond.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of stressing the importance of cultural aspects for the development of complex trade patterns in Asian waters, as well as the success and failure of merchant networks, I will re-vitalize Philip Curtin's term 'cross-cultural' in my discussion of individual agency and institutional settings throughout

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3 See among others Bonialian (2012); Shaw and Mola (2013).

4 The limited scope of this paper does not allow a calculation of trade volume and circulation of products of interest. For quantitative estimations see Alonso-Álvarez (2003: 63–95). For provision trade data see AGI Contaduría 1206 and 1236. For major wheat and iron supplies from China in the years 1689 and 1690 see Gil (2011: 64).

5 For commercial links between Manila and Macau in general see Pires (1987); Dyke (2010: 57–108). For slave trade specifically see Seijas (2014).

6 For this thesis I refer to recent research by Ruiz Stovel. See also Ptak (1994: 29–60).

historical processes.<sup>7</sup>

As indicated above, a decline in direct trade with East Asia around 1640 did not mean that Manila lost its attractiveness for foreign traders. Manila remained an attractive port city for merchants of various geographical and cultural backgrounds (Curtin, 1984).<sup>8</sup> Studying the Philippines' links with the Coromandel Coast in the early modern period enhances our knowledge on shifts in the maritime macro zone. Spanish sources stated that *salitre* and *pólvora* were the official reason for sending ships to various Asian ports, circumventing royal restrictions drafted in Madrid.<sup>9</sup> Reports sent to royal authorities in Spain imply that non-luxury trade patterns continued to exist almost unaffected after the 1640s, purely out of necessity. While an antagonism between state-like entities and sea-going individuals had become commonplace in early modern maritime history, I believe that studying saltpeter trade can serve as an important corrective for a passive Spanish presence in Asia. In doing so, the saltpeter trade puts export prohibitions from China and (armed) rivalry among various trading nations in the Indian Ocean and South China Seas into perspective. My hypothesis is that various actors including members of entrepreneurial minorities<sup>10</sup> and minor or secondary trading nations outsmarted state-like authorities. Either for the sake of enjoying state protection or in order to benefit from access to the market in Manila, they pretended to represent it or obey its rules. At the same time, individuals fostered good relations with other flexible private networks.

## II. Trade and Connections between Manila and the Coromandel Coast

Despite a wealth of research on flows of goods, ideas and people in the maritime macro zone between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, the links between the Philippines and the Indian subcontinent during the first age of globalization continue to be understudied.<sup>11</sup> Following William L. Schurz's plea in his

7 For a definition and recent trends in studying cross-cultural trade see Francesca et al., 2014.

8 Explicit references by English merchants and the conduct of surrounding seafaring groups speak for the attractiveness of Manila's location after the 1640's. See Tremml-Werner (2015: 312-313); Hoang, Anh Tuan (2005: 83); Quiason (1963: 69).

9 AGI Filipinas 126, n. 4 ("Carta de Domingo de Zabalburu sobre salitre"), 1702-6-1.

10 See Christine Dobbin, 1996, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*.

11 The study of Sinnappah Arasaratnam is an exception here. See Sinnappah Arasaratnam, 1986: 154; 208. See also the work of socio-economic historian (comparative Asia studies) Bhaswati

seminal work, first published in 1939,<sup>12</sup> we should moreover take into account that Arab and Indian merchants had commercially and spiritually linked the regions surrounding the Philippines and the Coromandel Coast for several centuries prior to the arrival of the Europeans.<sup>13</sup> When Islam spread from India far into the Sulu Zone via Arab trading networks to Southeast Asia, fledgling South East Asian sultanates received further impetus to send and receive foreign traders from the Muslim stronghold in Melaka, after the conversion of Melaka's ruler to Islam in 1414 (Jiménez, 2011: 415).<sup>14</sup> Accelerating Islamization in the Malay world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries helped Muslim traders of diverse origins (Arabs, Persians, Gujaratis, and Bengalis) to establish themselves on many different islands at different times. The establishment of Christian rule over the Philippines led to a re-orientation of Muslim merchant networks in the second half of the sixteenth century. After an interruption of about one hundred years, Spanish Manila's inter-Asian trade began to shift geographically from East Asia (namely Kyushu in Japan and Fujian in south-eastern China) towards the Indian Ocean during the second half of the seventeenth century. This continued into the eighteenth century, eventually leading to new dynamics based on the increase of trade and navigation in Asia after 1820, following the end of the trans-Pacific Manila Galleon trade (Legarda, 1999: 179–188).<sup>15</sup> This shift did not result in linear developments of exchange between the Philippines and ports on the coasts of India. Rather, this shift manifested itself in a new type of connections, which were arguably less economically beneficial. Overseas trade lost much of its significance as a source of income for the colonial budget during the course of the seventeenth century, when subsided from the vice-royal funds in New Spain and replaced by indigenous tribute. Alonso Álvarez's survey on the colony's

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Bhattacharya (2005: 277–323) research on commercial networks in the early modern Indian Ocean. See also Bhattacharya (2012: 545–578).

12 See Schurz (1985: 181), who pointed out that geographically Manila was “more advantageously situated for communication with the Asiatic mainland than with the connections with America.” Due to Manila's location at the western side of Luzon, leaving the Strait of San Bernardino (*Embocadero*) was one of the most challenging passages for the galleons bound for Acapulco.

13 Barendse (2009: 375–380) pointed out that geographically Manila was “more advantageously situated for communication with the Asiatic mainland than with the connections with America.”

14 For a summary of seminal research see Othman (2009: 85; 93–94). See also Majul's classic study (Majul, 1973: 44–65).

15 During the first half of the nineteenth century, foreign trade in the Philippines shifted from trans-shipment towards export of agricultural products to China and Europe. The rise in exports was mainly encouraged by foreign companies rather than by large-scale plantation projects.

finances reveals that in the year 1605, *tributos*, *aduanas* (customs) and *situado* (subsidy from New Spain) were approximately equal; whereas in 1645 the amount of indigenous tribute had almost tripled, being ten times as high as customs. Amounting to 336,000 pesos, the *situado* was three times higher than tribute income. Thereafter the composition of colonial income would constantly change, whereas revenue from foreign trade remained significantly below the two other sources of income.<sup>16</sup>

Relations between Luzon and the Coromandel Coast are closely linked to the history of European trading nations' expansion and establishment of trading outposts on the Indian Peninsula, beginning with the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century and followed by the French, English, Danish and others in the seventeenth. Paraphrasing Bhaswati Bhattacharya, we could say that the commercial success of European settlements in India depended to a large extent on Indian merchants operating between them, due to the proximity of those ports. Trade restrictions with rival ports were easily circumvented with kinship networks of Indian and Armenian brokers (Bhattacharya, 2012: 558). As far as relations between India and the Philippines were concerned, Sinnappah Arasaratnam has shown that direct trade fluctuated. His research indicates that mercantile activity between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, mostly between Madras and Manila, was comparatively high in the 1680s and in the period between 1710 and 1730. (Arasaratnam, 1987: 154; 208)

While the Coromandel Coast mainly exported textiles, traders returned from Luzon with tobacco, wax, sandalwood, and silver. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Spanish colonial authorities, Mexican wholesalers, and private merchants invested in trade between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. The route between Manila and the Coromandel Coast ports benefitted from an unparalleled entrepreneurial spirit of a number of actors.<sup>17</sup> In addition to business-oriented Spanish colonial administrators and versatile seafarers of different origins, Portuguese merchants acted as crucial brokers between Manila and maritime Indonesia and across the Strait of Malacca. With regard to the early modern Indo-Philippine exchange, Manila customs records introduced by James Boyajian's seminal work on Portuguese overseas *casados* indicate that the number of vessels from

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16 Alonso-Álvarez (2009: 79–117); in particular the table on p. 113 based on Contaduría 1195–1201.

17 See Antoni Picazo Muntaner (2014: 219): “The results of impeachment trials and secret inquiries into the activities of governors like Salcedo, Vargas or Cruzat, among others, testify to this.” Ibid, pp. 224–226: The author refers to the case of Governor Vargas' network and competition with big merchants in 1686.



Coromandel and Bengal ports loaded with attractive cotton cloth cargoes were more frequent than those from Goa and Cochin.<sup>18</sup> In what James C. Boyajian labels “luxury spice traffic via the Philippines” and a “developing Makassar-Manila trade axis”, the Portuguese distributed the bulk of cloves from Ambon and nutmeg and mace from Banda between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean (Boyajian, 1993: 237–238). Lucio de Sousa’s research indicates the significant role of Portuguese *conversos* (a.k.a. Jews who had converted to Catholicism) for the commercial life of the Spanish colony, in particular in those years when Manila’s trade with Fujian was interrupted (Manso and Sousa, 2011). A number of *conversos* from Macau were already working as agents for *conversos* in Mexico during the early decades of the Manila galleon trade. Etsuko Miyata Rodríguez even claims that Macau-based Portuguese traders were the backbone of the Manila trade during the entire seventeenth century (Rodríguez, 2009: 37–58).<sup>19</sup>

Economic historians’ emphasis on macro connections carry the risk of misrepresenting data. Antoni Picazo Muntaner’s ‘hispanic network model’—based on mercantilist control over trans-Pacific trade and an official prohibition of Spanish merchants of the Philippines to visit ports in Asia—neatly summarizes the absolute protectionist narrative of colonial trade (Muntaner, 2011).<sup>20</sup> Yet he creates a misleading picture by presenting data out of context when arguing that the “Philippine authorities traded more heavily with India’s coastal cities than with Japan’s, given the blockade applied to Spanish ships”.<sup>21</sup> However, trade with Japan ended in the 1620s, while trade with India did not start prior to the 1640s. Even if we were to compare these different periods directly, both trade volume and profit figures would refute Muntaner’s claim.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, both Muntaner’s finding that Cavite (Manila’s overseas trading port) was the secondary Portuguese stopover port east

18 As far as Portuguese participation in Manila trade is concerned, Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto’s remarks on the importance of Luso-Spanish common interests in the Maluku Islands and collaborations in Makassar until 1649 are of relevance for the Iberian presence in the region. See Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto (2014: 79–100). See also AGI Filipinas 31, n. 2 (1650–8–4), for Makassar.

19 Etsuko Miyata Rodríguez, ‘Early Manila Galleon Trade: Merchants’ Network Market in 16th-and 17th-Century Mexico’, in Donna Pierce and Ronald Otsuka (ed.), *Asia and Spanish America. Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850. Papers from the 2006 Mayer Center Symposium at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Frederick and Jan Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art at the Denver Museum, 2009).

20 Antoni Picazo Muntaner, ‘Ports and Commercial Networks’, 47–48.

21 Antoni Picazo Muntaner, ‘Ports and Networks’, 220 speaks of 1,000 trips from China and 47 from Japan for the seventeenth century and 142 to India.

22 For trade volume between Manila and Japan see Tremml-Werner (2015: 148–168).



of India and his claim that Portuguese commercial voyages between Luzon and the Coromandel Coast were confined to the Union of Crowns era (1581–1640) are easily challenged. Portuguese access to Manila’s foreign trade depended not on the political climate in Europe alone, but also on geo-political compromises in Asia. Private Portuguese trade in Manila increased in the 1630s, for instance due to the initiative of the highest colonial authority: the Viceroy of Goa (Conde de Linhares, 1629–1635), who sanctioned commercial voyages under certain conditions (Pinto, 2014).<sup>23</sup> Together with numerous semi-private initiatives throughout the seventeenth century, Linhares’ actions challenge the common view of a decline in Portuguese commercial activity and the general crisis discourse for the early seventeenth century after the end of direct trade between Macau and Japan in 1638.<sup>24</sup> By distinguishing between individual merchants of the Coromandel Coast, resident Portuguese small-scale trade and English East India Company trade, Radhika Seshan’s work further casts into doubt the crisis discourse for both Spanish and Portuguese trade in South East Asia after the 1640s. Combining network approaches with empirical records of Portuguese and Indian trading activity along the Coromandel Coast, Seshan shows how merchants from Porto Novo and Fort St. David were involved in lucrative trade to Manila throughout the seventeenth century. She presents evidence of private merchants and ship owners from Porto Novo, who became integrated into trade with Southeast Asia, sending ships from Coromandel ports to Arakan, Pegu, Tenasserim, Kedah, Aceh, Sri Lanka and Manila by the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup>

23 Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto, “Manila, Macao and Chinese Networks in South China Sea: Adaptive Strategies of Cooperation and Survival (Sixteenth-to-Seventeenth Centuries).” *Anais de Historia de Além-Mar* no. XV: 95. cf. Livros de Monções, Liv. 22, fl. 80 (Letter from the Viceroy Count of Vidigueira to the King, Goa, 10 Dec. 1625; Portuguese control of trade between China and Mexico as lamented by Grau y Monfalcón in 1636. See AGI Filipinas 41, n. 16.)

24 For the economic and political struggles of the Estado da India during Spanish rule, see Disney (1978: 50–70). For a contemporary description of the situation in Macau in the mid-seventeenth century, see Navarrete (1962: 263): “The trade of Japan failing, Macao began to decay; and that of Manila ceasing, it almost fell to the ground. I was told so in that City, and it was visible in the Wants they endur’d. The Monasteries which some years before maintain’d 24 Religious, in my time with much difficulty and in poverty maintain’d three. So the two Trades of Japan and Manila being at an end, they took up with the Commodities, which the Chinese bought, and they took Silks, Calicoes, and other Merchandize in exchange, which they sold at Siam and Macasar to the Spaniards by third hand.”

25 Seshan (2014: 116–117); See also Seshan (2012). Porto Novo was a Portuguese trading outpost,

Studies by Bhaswati Bhattacharya and Sebouh David Aslanian's shed light on a specific group of actors and networks: Armenians, who spread all over the ocean, benefitting from their neutral, non-religious and non-political agenda. Bhattacharya argues that Madras, Manila and New Julfa were all 'nodes' in the Armenian commercial net. Her argument that the Spanish ban on European shipping in Manila became advantageous for both Armenians and Indians as intra-regional carriers in the eighteenth century is highly convincing (Bhattacharya, 2008: 1–20; Aslanian, 2011). Aslanian, like Serafin Quiason before him, stressed the professionalism of Armenian brokers who managed to link Manila to the country trade dominated by European trading nations not welcome in Manila—including the Dutch, the English, and the French—from their most important settlement in Madras after 1666. Reports of vessels with 'Armenian colors', ships either run or owned by Armenians, which anchored in Cavite or Manila, prove their claims. Thus, similar to Portuguese intermediaries, Armenian go-betweens helped English and French merchants circumvent Spanish mercantilist restrictions.<sup>26</sup> Aslanian introduces among others the private Julfan shipping tycoon Khwaja Minas as a pioneer of trade between Manila and the Indian Ocean Coast ("Manilha trade") in 1668.<sup>27</sup>

As some of the ships flying Armenian flags collaborated with the English East India Company (EIC), we have reason to see connections between Manila and Asian country trade.<sup>28</sup> This of course contravened official Spanish restrictions and interfered in particular with the practice of closing Manila from English influence.

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which existed alongside the Portuguese settlement in Nagapattinam in south Coromandel with access to a cloth-producing hinterland.

26 Aslanian (2011: 54–63), Quiason (1963: 72): "As free access to Manila was allowed only to traders of Asian origin, English-owned goods were freighted on vessels owned by Armenians, Moslems, Hindus, and Parsis."

27 Aslanian (2011: 59), "The principal commodities circulating between India and Manila were silk (both Iranian and local Indian varieties) as well as Bengali textiles and Chinese goods purchased in Malacca and Canton, and cinnamon from Ceylon purchased in Batavia for Spanish silver from Acapulco."

28 With regard to national flags, it might be interesting to consider that their symbolic and practical value increased during the seventeenth century. This development is closely linked to the idea of neutrality after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, when European states came to follow a pragmatic logic and were less guided by religious differences. Leos Müller has argued that such *realpolitik* made a neutral stance morally and legally acceptable. But neutrality also provided the neutral nations with more economic opportunities. Ships under neutral flags were able to carry goods, including war supplies, to and between belligerents. Similar behaviour can indeed be found in the China Seas and the Indian Ocean in the late seventeenth and during the eighteenth centuries.

Colonial authorities were certainly aware of the backdoor tactics of English merchants, yet they decided to turn a blind eye to it. Philippine historian Serafin D. Quiason illustrated the multilayered nature of trade between Manila and Coromandel throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, when English initiatives to access the market in Manila by circumventing restrictions coincided with bold moves of Spanish colonial authorities. Governors General Manuel de Leon (r. 1669–1677) and his successor General Juan de Vargas Hurtado (r. 1678–1684) tried to initiate trade with India despite Manila's monopolistic restrictions incorporated into the Laws of the Indies (*Leyes de Indias*) of 1593. (Quiason, 1966)<sup>29</sup> As they were officially excluded from Manila, English merchants would sign up with Armenian ship owners, as vessels under Armenian flags were permitted access. Due to their special status, Armenians had taken over most of the Madras trade around 1700 and dominated trade to China and shipments to South East Asian ports. They also helped to integrate private trade of English company merchants with lucrative exchange at Manila. Prior to the occupation of Manila in 1762, it seems that Manila Spaniards were intrigued by these English visitors and became involved with English merchants operating in the China Seas whenever a peaceful opportunity presented itself.<sup>30</sup>

Before long, a small number of Armenian merchants would also settle in Manila, where they came to inhabit prestigious town addresses. While some of them converted to Catholicism, a step that immensely improved their economic and social opportunities, those who remained with the Armenian Gregorian Church often found themselves prosecuted by the Inquisition due to the heretical stigma attached by the Papacy (Aslanian, 2011: 61–63). Being considered *sectarios*, they were affected by the royal decree of 1711, which aimed at separating the non-Catholic population from the rest.<sup>31</sup> Even so, in everyday commerce the Armenians' Christian disposition was as useful an asset as their alleged neutrality. (Zapatero and Lamikiz, 2014: 693–722) Moreover, speaking the same language, using the Azarian calendar and being part of the Apostolic Church gave the Armenian network a sense of cultural unity and solidarity, which ultimately benefitted the development of credit and trust systems.<sup>32</sup>

The first Spanish vessel under the command of the Armenian John Domingos

29 The survey is largely based on Blair and Robertson source edition (op. cit.) and EIC records.

30 AGI Filipinas 189, n. 20 (1757–10–21).

31 AGI Filipinas 130, n. 19 (1713–6–8).

32 Bhattacharya (2012: 548). With regard to the positive impact of kinship on improving business structures of multiple networks, the similarities among Armenian and Hokkien merchants are striking. See Chin (2010: 173–174).

was recorded in Madras in 1678—the *San Miguel*. It would return the following year under the command of Francisco Cornera, before Jesús Nazareno guided a Spanish vessel to the Coromandel Coast eight years later. In 1694, a Spanish merchant by the name of Don Teraleo spent about four months in Madras, buying “2000 bales of cloth for Manilha” (Quiason, 1966: 66–69). Quiason’s reference to English records mentioning that Portuguese from Santo Tomé traded saltpeter in the 1690s could be a further indication of indirect Spanish involvement through Indo-Portuguese merchants. In 1673, the first voyage under Portuguese flag from Madras to Manila was launched; after 1678 Portuguese ships would even sail annually.<sup>33</sup> The same author calls our attention to intermediary Armenian trade for English East India Company merchants in Manila, for instance, Khwaja Minas, an Armenian who traded with Manila for three consecutive years. The example of a versatile Portuguese merchant known as João Caroon, who reportedly integrated Manila into maritime Asian country trade and also served the EIC as interpreter before he piloted an Armenian vessel to Luzon, once again illustrates the quintessential function of individuals in connecting otherwise restricted exchange patterns (Quiason, 1966: 70).<sup>34</sup>

Presenting examples of private Portuguese and Spanish entrepreneurs in Malabar, Madras, and Santo Tomé between the 1670s and 1690s, Quiason’s research suggests that high colonial authorities became an essential component in such flexible networks. Indeed, as previously indicated, in the second half of the seventeenth century Philippine governors showed unprecedented entrepreneurial spirit in their dealings with smaller or new trading groups such as Danish merchants. On other occasions, however, more conservative Spanish policymakers would counter this trade by adding further restrictions.<sup>35</sup> As their marginal position in India did not allow the Danish to monopolize trans-regional trade, they welcomed other avenues to participate in long-distance exchange. Maritime trading networks included members of smaller trading nations or non-established overseas trade minorities, such as Danish, Irish, and possibly even Catalan merchants (such as the Catalan Juan Ventura Serra, who traded between Siam and Malabar in 1674)<sup>36</sup> or

33 For the Portuguese merchant activity in the Indian Ocean and beyond, see Subrahmanyam (1990).

34 See also Baena Zapatero and Lamikiz (2014: 702).

35 For a transcript of the order (Traslado de real cédula) of November 4, 1661 on the prohibition of commerce with foreigners, see AGI Filipinas 9, r. 3, n. 49, (1666–6–10).

36 For the specific reference to Juan Ventura Serra see Quiason (1966: 66). The issue of Catalans in maritime Asia is of great interest to economic historians engaged in the legal exclusion debate. On this point see Shaw (1980: 223–236). Martínez Shaw argued that the absence of Catalanian

Tamil, English, and Dutch entrepreneurs. When operating between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea they sometimes collaborated with and sometimes acted independently from the East Indian trading companies (EIC and VOC).

A variety of sources leave no doubt that regional context mattered for the Coromandel-Manila trade. Quiason described both parallels and links between active Spanish commercial ventures in India and trade missions from Manila to other Southeast Asian destinations, including Makassar, Cochinchina, Cambodia, Tonkin, Batavia and Siam (Quiason, 1966: 67). In this context, Siam deserves special mention, as it became involved in the Spanish Philippines' saltpeter supply network as early as the late 1620s, as well as linking 'insular' South East Asia with the Coromandel Coast.<sup>37</sup> Spaniards had sought to establish commercial and diplomatic relations with rulers of Southeast Asia since the 1570s, as part of their geopolitical strategies. Delegations were repeatedly sent to Cambodia, Siam, Japan, Cochinchina, and even Ming China to secure supplies including saltpeter or ship-building materials.<sup>38</sup> For the year 1609, a record-making reference to saltpeter from China and the services of Manila-based Chinese *polvorista* (manufacturer of gun powder) have survived.<sup>39</sup>

At roughly the same time as the Ming-Qing transition completely altered alliances on the maritime stage, transregional stakeholders such as the Jesuits and the EIC changed their tactics, while the Portuguese lost ground to the VOC's monopolizing efforts and the Zheng empire. Iberian merchants made temporary profit from conducting business with surrounding insular states such as Makassar. A survey by Gerrit Knaap and Heather Sutherland showed that of an annual average of 250 outbound vessels, about two ships were sent to Manila, two to three to Cebu and a few more to Mindanao and Sulu. (Knaap and Sutherland, 2004: 19) A reorientation away from the Indonesian Peninsula followed the Dutch conquest in the 1660s, which equally affected Portuguese shipping and colonial society in Manila.

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merchants in overseas trade was due to a mix of royal restrictions and economic inability in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While Catalans usually do not appear in the Philippines, scattered evidence suggests their random involvement in Asia. With Ventura Serra, we know at least of one registered Catalan merchant active in the Manila trade. See Quiason (1966: 65–66).

37 Rodao (1997: 62; 78). See also Blair and Robertson (eds.), 2005. *Explorations by Early Navigators, Descriptions of the Islands and Their Peoples, Their History and Records of the Catholic Missions, as Related in Contemporaneous Books and Manuscripts, Showing the Political, Economic, Commercial and Religious* (Cleveland, 1903–1909), vol. 23: 52–53; vol. 24: 207.

38 AGI Filipinas 18A, r. 5, n. 31 (1587–6–26); AGI Filipinas 330, l. 5, folio. 109<sup>v</sup>–110<sup>r</sup> (1638–12–2).

39 AGI Filipinas 36, n. 40 (1609–1–18).

Both Dutch aggression, which continued after peace treaties had been ratified in Westphalia, and threats by the Zheng empire until 1681 seriously harmed the most important commercial pillar of the Spanish colony: Fujianese trade with Manila. Emperor Kangxi's 1684 lifting of the maritime ban ultimately had a positive effect on Manila (Zhao, 2013: 35–40). After 1685, vessels from China indeed began to appear in growing numbers in the records. Yet, when no ships reached Manila from Mainland China between 1680 and 1685, a number of vessels were recorded travelling to and from Siam, Makassar, Madras, Surat, and Porto Novo to Manila, while Spanish ship owners travelled straight to Indian Ocean ports.<sup>40</sup>

### III. Coromandel, Manila and Saltpeter

Next to the various textile cargos mentioned above, saltpeter became a product of macro-regional relevance: various actors became involved in satisfying the constant demand in the Indian Ocean and China Seas during the early modern period.<sup>41</sup> In China, exporting saltpeter had been prohibited since the Song period (960–1279) for fear of arming potential enemies, as it was traditionally used as a chemical explosive. The Court decreed in 1076 that no private subject was to trade saltpeter or sulfur across the borders.<sup>42</sup> In the early modern period, the reputation of high-quality Bengali Coast saltpeter in the Indian Ocean attracted Portuguese and English merchants' trading interests. Saltpeter was one of the key goods contributing to the shift of India and China from exporting manufactured goods to supplying raw materials to foreign nations (Parthasarathi and Riello, 2014: 10–11). Re-evaluating available historical records on saltpeter trade to Manila should help uncover a more nuanced view of early modern maritime interaction of networks and states with their political and commercial functions. In other words, it will address questions of continuity and rupture against a backdrop of clandestine trade and smuggling.

What made saltpeter so attractive and what exactly is it? Saltpeter is the end

40 Gil (2011: 118); AGI Filipinas 8, r. 1, n. 6 (1629–8–1); See AGI Contaduría 1235, folio. 13<sup>v</sup>; 67<sup>r</sup>; sobre los géneros traídos-salitre, cf. Gil, *Chinos*, p. 178: “El capitán Juan González de Escobar hizo dos viajes a Siam: uno en 1660 y otro en 1662. Pagó de almojarifazgo por las mercancías traídas en primer viaje 386 pesos y 2 tomines.”

41 For an in-depth study on Indian saltpeter trade see Frey (2009: 507–554). See <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-209404380.html>. Last access March 12, 2016.

42 See Needham et al. (1986: 126). For the development of gunpowder in Song China see Smith (2009: 347–483). For the trade prohibition see Andrade (2016: 33).



product of the decay of organic substances including manure and rotting plant fiber. As the powder is hard to store, places with limited access to the resource, such as the Spanish Philippines, were forced to import it. Although both natural and artificial saltpeter require boiling for long periods, artificial saltpeter requires a higher proportion of charcoal and sulfur and the end product is generally weaker, with less ballistic strength. The climate and environmental conditions on the Western Indian subcontinent offered optimal conditions for the natural processing and yearly availability of pure nitrate potassium. This explains contemporary Spanish remarks on the outstanding quality of the Indian natural substance. Gujarati saltpeter was traded in the sixteenth century via Melaka to Java, long before the arrival of the Spaniards in the Philippines (Frey, 2009: 513).

As previously indicated, the Spanish in Asia had become involved in armed aggressions against Western European traders such as the Dutch and the English, the Zheng maritime empire, and Moro raiders, by the middle of the seventeenth century. Thus, the colonial government required a constant supply of saltpeter. Military supplies were not only in high demand among conflicting parties in South East Asian waters during the second half of the seventeenth century, but also frequently redistributed overseas. Over the years, numerous lengthy reports by Spanish colonial officials documented the availability and acquisition of this gunpowder ingredient. Those documents both testify to the importance of the politically delicate saltpeter importation and also suggest that after 1640—following the trade rupture with Japan and interruptions with Fujian and Macau—maritime actors had altered established business patterns.

From the early years of Spanish rule, the importation and re-exportation of saltpeter contributed to the versatile character of foreign trade in early modern Manila. During Japanese warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi's infamous attempts to conquer Korea in 1592 and 1598, Japanese merchants ironically acquired Chinese saltpeter in Manila, as Nakajima Gakushō has shown (Gakushō, 2008: 145–168).<sup>43</sup> Despite the continuous Ming prohibitions on the export of saltpeter, Antonio de Morga, a late sixteenth century Spanish official in Manila, insisted on regular supply by Fujianese merchants. He ordered that *sangleys* (a.k.a. Chinese) captains and merchants were to bring saltpeter, iron, copper and other metals that were unavailable in the Philippines, under penalty of imprisonment. While Mexican authorities only occasionally included saltpeter in their emergency relief (*socorro*) for the Philippines, many Fujianese traders found ways to benefit from the colony's saltpeter

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43 For Tokugawa Ieyasu's interest in saltpeter from Siam, see Iwamoto and Bytheway (2011: 81–104).



shortage.<sup>44</sup> When neither of these supply channels could satisfy Filipino-Spanish demand, other sources had to be found. This is how the Coromandel Coast came into the picture. For instance, when no ships arrived in Manila from Fujian between 1680 and 1685—as a consequence of the turmoil following the Ming Qing transition (1644–1683) in China—ships from Madras and Surat were recorded in Manila’s port registers.<sup>45</sup>

Trade with the Coromandel was certainly not limited to saltpeter. The *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville (hereafter AGI) and the *Archivo Histórico Nacional* in Madrid hold more than 30 files dealing with interaction between Manila and the Coromandel Coast in the relevant period. These reports give insight into complex exchange patterns. While the recorded episodes of commercial exchange with the Coromandel Coast are comparatively few, the number of pages drafted on the purchase of Bengali saltpeter worth 6,000 pesos in the year 1700, on behalf of the incumbent Governor General Fausto Cruzat y Góngora, is indeed striking.<sup>46</sup> This commercial journey occurred without royal sanction. In an ex-post justification to the authorities in Madrid, the new governor Zabalburu explained that the colony’s demand for saltpeter had to be satisfied by supplies from abroad. Although saltpeter was abundantly available from New Spain, shipping the required amounts from Coromandel was considered more economical. Explicit references point to regular commercial shipping with the Coromandel Coast in the early years of the eighteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, provisions remained a constant point of contention between colonial authorities in Manila and Mexico.<sup>48</sup> For example, a royal order of 1702 demanded that Governor Zabalburu organize a group of experts to search the archipelago for the nitrate. He was told that if that expedition failed, the islands would have to be supported via the Pacific, as purchasing saltpeter in Asia would give way to unwanted contact with the English and the Dutch.<sup>49</sup> Official records indicate that Zabalburu complied: In 1708, as a result of the unsuccessful expedition in the Philippines, he petitioned annual saltpeter cargoes from Mexico for gunpowder production.<sup>50</sup>

44 AGI Filipinas 34, n. 24 (1578); AGI Filipinas 29, n. 33 (1580).

45 See Gil (2011: 118).

46 AGI Filipinas 126, n. 4 (1702–6–1).

47 AGI Filipinas 163, n. 80 (1702–5–17).

48 AGI Filipinas 332, l. 10, folio. 163<sup>v</sup>–165<sup>r</sup> (1700–11–20); AGI Filipinas 332, l. 11, folio. 49<sup>r</sup>–50<sup>v</sup> (1704–6–11).

49 AGI Filipinas 332, l. 11, folio. 47<sup>r</sup>–49<sup>r</sup> (1704–6–11).

50 AGI Filipinas 129, n. 73 (1708–6–18).

Many years earlier, in 1629, Governor Niño de Távora had informed the king in Spain of a cargo of saltpeter from Kochi (Cochin on the south-west coast of India).<sup>51</sup> Reporting on the arrival of four vessels from India loaded with flour and an unspecified quantity of saltpeter, the governor strongly emphasized the hardship resulting from the late arrival of the galleon from Mexico and the difficulties in obeying the regulations stipulated in the 1593 laws. He also emphasised New Spain's reluctance to provide the necessary support and stressed that Captain Felipe Mascareñas (*capitán de Cochin*) had punctually shipped urgently needed saltpeter to Manila upon the governor's request.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the governor's steps appear well planned.

Given the wide-spread Portuguese commercial networks in Asia, we may also take for granted that Portuguese merchants and navigators were involved in these business deals. Whilst it is true that once the Portuguese lost their status as vassals of the Spanish king, some Manila-based Spaniards became more cautious in their dealings with the 'Braganza rebels', hostile perceptions did not interfere with joint Luso-Spanish business efforts in Asia. But hostilities and competition had an impact on the frequency of commercial exchange, so that in times of recession colonial authorities were forced to take action. After 1659, when Manila Spaniards had long been waiting in vain for merchandise from China, Tonkin, Siam and Makassar, due to a lack of silver supply from Mexico,<sup>53</sup> the *cabildo* (city council) and Governor General Manrique de Lara (1653–1663) took action (Lucena, 1984). A register of goods shipped from the Coromandel to Manila in 1660 lists saltpeter next to cloth, iron and diamonds. Active outgoing trade was encouraged for at least 20 years, out of the necessity for the survival of the Spanish colony due to the domestic shortages in iron, wheat, saltpeter and wood for naval construction.<sup>54</sup> In 1673, the first voyage was launched from Madras to Manila under Portuguese flag. After 1678, such journeys were carried out annually, and ships started to be licensed. They would usually depart from Madras in February or March, or between June and July, to coordinate with the trading season in Manila (Quiason, 1966: 73).<sup>55</sup> Alongside commercial connections between the Philippines and Coromandel in the 1670s and 1680s, the trans-oceanic linkage enabled the highest authorities in Manila (Gover-

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51 AGI Filipinas 8, r. 1, n. 6 (1629–8–1).

52 AGI Filipinas 8, r. 1, n. 6 (1629–8–1).

53 AGI Filipinas 28, n. 63 (1659–7–15).

54 AGI Filipinas 64, n. 1 (1686); The cargo of the vessels from Madras (Madrastapatán) recorded in Contaduría records (Escribanía 412A, quaderno 8 de los librado en la real caxa).

55 The author mentions a Portuguese pilot by the name of Domingo Mendis de Rosario as leading figure.

nor General Gabriel de Curucelaegui y Arriola (1684–1689) and Archbishop Felipe Pardo) to use Coromandel for sending urgent letters on European ships to Europe. Thus, in times of crisis, the Coromandel, with its many European factories, also served as a post and communication way station, at least until the 1690s.<sup>56</sup>

A reference to the arrival on a merchant ship from Coromandel to Manila in 1726 of a Frenchman by the name Berne points to the involvement of less established trading nations.<sup>57</sup> We may assume that citizens coming from minor trading nations found a niche through connecting the western coast of Luzon and Coromandel in the first half of the eighteenth century. For example, three archival records from 1751 address the arrival of Danish merchants on a Danish vessel in Manila in 1742.<sup>58</sup> These documents show that the Spanish governor had granted a Danish trading vessel from Tranquebar shelter in Spanish ports, in an attempt to circumvent royal orders. He based this special permission on the terms that were generally applied to friendly nations (*naciones amigas*). Although the concession excluded any trade activity, authorities on the Iberian Peninsula found it outrageous.<sup>59</sup> Official records reveal both the usual Spanish suspicion when it came to foreign trading nations and cautious interest in potential future business deals. With regard to permitting commerce with Danish ships in Manila, a similar issue had been raised in 1645, when two royal decrees to the *Audiencia* in Manila condemned the colonial authorities' decision to receive the Danish ship "Buena Esperanza".<sup>60</sup> However, unlike in the mid-eighteenth century, colonial officials would be the ones to prosecute the alleged (as they were probably disguised Dutch, or collaborating with the latter in reality) Scandinavian visitors. Shortly after their arrival in Cavite in 1645, the vessel's captain Esquifre Miguel and pilot Isaac Juanes—note the hispanicized names—were condemned to death by the *Audiencia* and kept imprisoned. The Council of the Indies in Spain intervened with a pardon for the two convicts—a remarkable step given that Spanish and the Danes fought on opposite sides in the confessional conflicts among great powers in Europe's Thirty Years War (1618–1648).<sup>61</sup> However, what influenced the authorities in Manila to treat the Danish seamen so harshly? In those turbulent years of earthquake (1645), accusations of bad governance and

56 AGI Filipinas 13, r. 1, n. 8 (1688–5–30); AGI Filipinas 15, r. 1, n. 25 (1694–12–4).

57 AGI Filipinas 179, n. 28 (1738–7–30).

58 AGI Filipinas 97, n. 19 (1751–2–12).

59 AGI Filipinas 448, n. 4 (1747–6–21).

60 AGI Filipinas 193, n. 11 (1654–2–6).

61 AGI Filipinas 348, l. 4, folio. 125<sup>r</sup>–129<sup>r</sup> (1654–11–21); AGI Filipinas 348, l. 4, folio. 129<sup>v</sup> (1654–11–15).

the tyranny of Manuel Estacio Venegas, colonial officers were particularly on the alert. Governor Fajardo's advisors suspected Dutch traders of entering Manila under the pretext of being Danish.<sup>62</sup>

For the sake of integrating heterogeneous members of smaller trading nations into the bigger picture, we should take a closer look at an Irish merchant by the name of James Lynch,<sup>63</sup> who travelled as second pilot on the vessel *La Flecha* from Coromandel to Manila in the 1780s. Lynch's case confirms that foreign trade restrictions in Manila had been eased by the end of the eighteenth century to the point that, after 1789, Manila was open to Asian cargoes on European vessels (Shaw and Mola, 2013). Lynch's case was brought before the king's council in Spain, because it was unclear whether he was to be charged the usual duties for foreigners (*almojarifazgo* and *anclaje*) upon arrival or whether he should be exempt, as Spaniards were.<sup>64</sup> Before long, the king ruled differently, ordering an immediate expulsion: Lynch would neither be charged *almojarifazgo* nor anchorage tax, but should leave the port immediately together with all suspicious foreigners (*extranjeros sospechosos*).<sup>65</sup> The verdict corresponded to the restrictions stated in the above-mentioned *Laws of the Indies*. The sole exceptions were applied to foreigners who worked in necessary crafts, as navigators, or were married to locals. Hence, neutral subjects such as Armenian traders, who stayed longer than necessary for finishing their business in Manila, should also be closely monitored.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of the negative outcome of the Irishman's trade adventure in Manila, this episode is illuminating in view of the constant ethnic labeling as "Irish", pointing to the strategic use of national categories for the sake of demarcation. An alleged good Catholic was more likely to find mercy with the Spanish authorities than a random subject of the English East India Company, which he probably was.<sup>67</sup>

62 AGI Filipinas 43, n. 8. In a future study it will probably be necessary to ask why Diego Hinojosa, who accused Manuel Estacio Venegas of usurping the governorship, fled from the Philippines via Terrenate to New Spain onboard a Danish vessel.

63 Known as Santiago Lynch in Spanish records.

64 AGI Filipinas 338, l. 21, folio. 84<sup>r</sup>-87<sup>v</sup> (1787-11-6).

65 AGI Filipinas 338, l. 21, folio. 84<sup>r</sup>-87<sup>v</sup> (1787-11-6).

66 AGI Filipinas 334, l. 15, folio. 355<sup>r</sup>-359<sup>r</sup> (1744-8-6).

67 As flexible travelling individual, who tried his luck in lucrative port cities in Asia, he was not an isolated case. Kristie Flannery followed the global life of the Swiss merchant Don César Falliet. K.P. Flannery, Policing Foreigners in Colonial Manila: The Case of Don César Falliet. *Third Cosmopolis Conference Philippine Crossings: Entangled Voices between Oceans, c. 1500-1800*. National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), Manila, Republic of the Philippines, 21-23 June, 2016.

The British occupation of Manila (1762–1764) certainly marked the start of changing power relations in the China Seas, where a new form of rivalry emerged among European trading nations interested in direct access to the Canton trade. However, in the aftermath of the Seven Years War, the English were unable to bring the entire macro-regional trade under their control. At the dawn of the imperialist age in East Asia, the Spaniards—who had traditionally followed different imperial strategies—now felt pressure to more actively defend their economic interests. In addition to reforms during the rule of Simón de Anda y Salazar (1770–1776) and José Basco y Vargas (1778–1787) and the opening of Manila to international trade in 1789, the Spanish Armada carried out direct expeditions from Cadiz via the Cape of Good Hope to Manila between 1765 and 1785. Historians even speak of a new era of economic history of the Philippines. What is more, trade involving the Spanish between Porto Novo and Manila continued after the British withdrawal.<sup>68</sup>

In the Philippines, the creation of the merchant tribunal (*Consulado*) in 1769 aimed at directing trade from the Philippines to Asian ports and thus officially permitted the merchants of Manila to participate in trade in all ports of Asia. At the same time, it was mandated that new institutions should further restrict foreign access to Manila (Yuste, 2007: 149–203; Bonialian, 2012: 398–409). One outcome of the Spanish reform struggle was the founding of the Real Compañía de Filipinas ([Spanish] Royal Philippine Company) in 1785, with the very ambitious goal of becoming an instrumental institution of inter-Asian trade emulating European chartered companies (Trechuelo, 2001: 227–232; Permanyer-Ugarte mendia, 2013: 83–116). This was an attempt to catch up with monopolistic policies of trading companies and mercantile houses, such as the Compañía de los Cinco Gremios Mayores de Madrid and House of Ustáriz, San Ginés y Compañía, who invested in intra-Asian trade from the Philippines to China and the Coromandel Coast. A further objective was to invest in export-oriented agriculture and domestic commodity production. Hence during the 1780s, one to two Spanish ships made the voyage to Amoy each year, in addition to the one or two going to Canton and Macau. Such structural changes are certainly linked to the economic reforms of the Bourbon rulers (*reformas borbónicas*) aiming at diversifying Philippine economy, as a reaction to changes in global trade and international relations (Permanyer-Ugarte mendia, 2017).<sup>69</sup> What role did the Coromandel play for Manila in this new era? While it

68 AGI Filipinas 336, l. 18, folio. 56<sup>v</sup>–58<sup>v</sup> (1768–12–21): Reference to a trading ship (Sultanesa de Began) of the Nabab of Hindustan arrived in Manila in the year 1767.

69 Discussed in detail by Ander Permanyer-Ugarte mendia in his contribution to an upcoming volume on *Philippine Crossings*, forthcoming with Brill in 2017.

has been claimed that once colonial rule had been firmly reestablished in the 1780s, trade dwindled “to merely peddling trade, in small ships, for small sums, and for small quantities” (Seshan, 2014: 117), the fact that in the year 1786 the Spanish vessel “San Blas” had returned from a trip to Coromandel,<sup>70</sup> suggests exchange had not ceased. In addition, we have evidence of a number of Fujianese junks carrying merchandize originating from Coromandel between the Chinese coast to Manila in the same period.<sup>71</sup> What is more, with the increase of European vessels in the late 1780s, a new type of sea-going merchant gained a foothold in the Manila trade. Their presence was partly a result of the above-mentioned reforms, which highlights the shortcomings of a galleon-centric narrative with its over-emphasis on Mexican merchant agency and exaggeration of early modern Spanish economic backwardness in Asia.

#### IV. Concluding Remarks

The available—yet limited—data in Spanish archives provides mostly circumstantial evidence regarding the role of the Coromandel Coast as a node in multi-directional networks, operating over more than a century despite political frictions and economic rivalry. Placed in a macro-regional perspective of the Indian Ocean and the China Seas, it shows a clear picture of shifts in actors, networks and goods and a lasting integration of the Indian Ocean, beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century. It also recommends not overestimating the volume and frequency of exchange between India and the Philippines during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Economic and political conflicts would prove to interrupt movements on the seas, whilst water-bound journeys as such were still a very exhausting undertaking in that day and age.

Among the goods traded between the Coromandel Coast and Manila, saltpeter was neither the most profitable nor the most common commodity traded. It was more of an in-between commodity. As such, the saltpeter trade helps to illustrate the global dimensions of early modern cross-cultural trade between the Indian Ocean and the China Seas. The saltpeter trade with the Coromandel Coast illustrates the shifting boundaries between theory and practice in a colonial setting. Hence, saltpeter cargoes also shed light on maritime dynamics beyond the spheres of Iberian mercantilist control or nascent European imperialism. On the one hand, complex circumstances forced the Spaniards to be pragmatic about the choice of their sup-

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70 AGI Filipinas 391, n. 48 (1786-1-1).

71 AGI Filipinas 943, n. 17 (1777-6-28); AGI Filipinas 337, l. 20, folio. 244<sup>v</sup>-248<sup>v</sup> (1784-7-18).



pliers. On the other, Manila continuously attracted actors of various backgrounds including Armenians, Portuguese and New Christians, as well as English, French and Danish company merchants.

Focusing on the multifaceted nature of exchange between Manila and the Coromandel Coast offers various insights. First, it refutes the common view that Portuguese trade in Manila disappeared with the end of the Union of Crowns in 1640. It further puts the narrative of inactive or even reluctant colonial officers of the Habsburg Empire into perspective. Examples of other vital parties of the seventeenth and eighteenth century-trade in Manila moreover show that neither along the Coromandel Coast nor in the Philippines can early modern cross-cultural actors be easily segmented into cut-and-dried categories of national belonging. Most of them had hidden agendas or alter egos, which let them easily abandon alleged principles or feelings of belonging. In short, between the Coromandel Coast and the Philippines, competition among trading nations co-existed with collaboration of individual members of various backgrounds, who could join forces in circumventing state control or other superior competitors. This leads to two further conclusions: one, that open and flexible networks offered individuals alternative protection to the early modern state; and two, in the period studied in this article, that trading outposts in Asia were rarely conditioned by European politics.

Last, the article introduces ‘flexibility’ as a suitable alternative for the similarly lofty category of trust in the early modern period. Actors who emphasized their belonging to a certain state or religion can help shape our understanding of the flexibility of the roles of early modern actors. Acting as they did, and by being prepared to change their roles if the opportunity demanded, they certainly had profound knowledge of circumstances in both Asia and Europe. Aside from being audacious, their flexibility stemmed from the awareness of being protected by an umbrella group, a type of community or network capable of defending travelling individuals and transnational actors in delicate situations.

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# 跨網絡聯繫中的邊緣參與者： 重新審視馬尼拉貿易，1640-1780

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## 摘 要

學者對於馬尼拉在印度洋與中國海間從事遠程硝石貿易此事，仍少有關心。軍事補給方面的需求，不僅來自對於菲律賓周邊海域互相衝突的各方，也由此向海外各地分別供給。如此馬尼拉便於 1700 年左右與印度東岸科羅曼得爾海岸產生了聯繫。西班牙文獻證據顯示，1640 年代日本鎖國，並接連與福建、澳門斷航後，馬尼拉的貿易網絡便有所更動。硝石貿易的實例展現出伊比利亞商業菁英背後驅動此一變動的力量，當中亦有亞美尼亞商人、葡萄牙猶太人、英、法、丹麥商人的參與。

關鍵字：馬尼拉、印度洋、中國海、硝石貿易、依比利亞人